

Epicurus' Birthdate

Post by “Eikadistes” of July 8, 2022 at 1:05 PM

Why do we have three different birthdates for Epicurus?

The 7th

“Epicurus was born (as Laertius relates out of the Chronology of Apollodorus) in the 3rd year of the 109th Olympiad, the 7th day of the month Gamelion” (Gassendi, *Epicurus, His Life and Doctrine* 106, 1660)

“[F]or he was born on the 7th and dy’d on the 10th of the Month *Gamelion*” (Stanley, *The History of Philosophy: Volume 3*, 122, 1660)

“[A]fter the death of Epicurus they were to be perpetuated in memory of himself [...] the anniversary of his birth, which fell on the seventh day of the month Gamelion” (De Witt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* 104, 1954)

“First as to chronology. Of the authorities used in the *Life* far the best is Apollodorus, whose versified *Chronology* embodied the results of the great Eratosthenes. His data make it clear that Epicurus was born on the 7th of Gamelion (*i.e.* in our January) 341 B.C., and died in 270 B.C.” (Taylor, *Epicurus*, 18-19, 1911)

“Diogenes Laertius (10:14) also records a tradition that placed Epicurus’ birthday on the seventh of Gamelion. On the confusion (ancient and modern) between the gathering on the twentieth of every month and the celebration fo Epicurus’ birthday on the tenth of Gamelion, see Clay 1986 and Sider 1997: 152-53 and 156. Cicero (*Fin.* 2.101) and Pliny (*HN* 35.5) differentiate between the two” (Gordon, *Then Invention and Gendering of Epicurus* 30, 2012)

“He was born, according to Apollodorus in his *Chronicles* [...] on the seventh day of the month of Gamelion, seven years after the death of Plato.” (Mensch, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 498, 2020)

The 10th

“Another part went to defray the expenses of the social meetings held annually on the anniversary of the birthday of Epicurus (the 10th of the Attic month Gamêlion)” (Wallace, *Epicureanism* 66)

“[T]he annual gathering of the group to celebrate his birthday on the tenth of Gamelion (in January).” (Clay, *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* 22)

“Epicureans are to observe: Epicurus’ birthday on the tenth of the month Gamelion” (Gordon, *Then Invention and Gendering of Epicurus* 30)

“The Will provides (a) for an annual celebration of the birthday of Epicurus on the tenth of Gamelion (his birthday was actually on the seventh, according to Diog. Laert. 10.14)” (The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams 394)

The 20th

“He was born on the twentieth of the month of Gamelion (24 January 341) [...] The debate over the exact date of his birth was definitively resolved by Alpers 1968.” (Algra, *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* 43)

“There were two rites for Epicurus: one annual, the twentieth of Gamelion, his birthday, and one on the twentieth of each month...” (Dorandi, *Oxford Handbook of Epicurus and Epicureanism* 58)

“Cf. Plut., *Adv. Col.* 1117AB. Epicurus’ birthday was commemorated each year and the twentieth day of each month was celebrated in honour of Metrodorus and later also of Epicurus himself. Cf. De Witt, *Epicurus* 105.” (Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* 11, 1972)

“[F]or conducting the customary birthday feast for us every year on the twentieth of Gamelion” (Epicurus, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* translated by Stephen White 417, 2021)